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## Opportunity assessment – A tool for work planning

*Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises*  
DEMOSTHENES

### Introduction

Networks of capacity building institutions have emerged as a means to address capacity building needs and draw on the breath of skills and experiences across the network members. To contribute to sustainability of the capacity building process and have a tangible impact on the way water resources are being managed, the network should be in a position of identifying project opportunities, gaps and needs in capacity building.

The network should be at the forefront in the development of knowledge on IWRM and access to international experience. Therefore it may also trigger demand for capacity building as well as being aware of future trends. They should be prepared for changing demands from the water sector and have a good grasp of developments in education programmes as well as other capacity building activities.

Capacity building should be responding to demand in order to be both relevant and have an impact. Capacity building is a service and whilst in part it requires a long-term view it also is required to be responsive to the rapid changes taking place in society. Water sector managers ultimately decide when capacity building services are required. A good network is in touch with the right people and ready to provide those services. The present document is intended to assist capacity building networks incorporate sector capacity building needs into their work plans.

#### **Purpose**

The opportunity assessment tool is to enable capacity building networks identify the immediate capacity building requirements of the water managers in the water sector and to prioritise those needs according to the ability of the network to deliver.

The tool is a set of guidelines, recommended activities, tips and definitions that may be used partly or as a whole to identify project opportunities and establish a proactive relation of the network with its target public.

Before using the tool a newly formed network, including its secretariat, should reach a basic level of understanding and be clear on the basic elements of the networks and the concept of networking, e.g.:

- Mission and vision
- Objectives
- Network target group
- Network strengths and weaknesses and capacity to deliver
- Benefits for members
- Added value of networking

This will allow the network to get out the most benefit from this tool.

#### **Objective**

The main objective of the tool is the identification of effective demand, presenting opportunities for networks to plan and respond to immediate capacity building needs of the water sector.

### Users of the tool

Capacity building networks or individual institutions may use the tool to identify capacity building opportunities.

### Expected output

A prioritised list of activities that may be undertaken by the network as a basis for the work plan in the immediate and short-term after which it is recommended to update the information by using the tool again.

### Underlying Principles

- Capacity building must address both the long term and short term needs of society.
- Demand for capacity building is best expressed as “effective demand”. This means the demand that someone is willing to pay for. Networks can only provide services if there is some means to cover the cost incurred.
- The Opportunity Assessment Tool does not replace the more comprehensive training needs assessment (table 1).

Table 1: Comparison between opportunity assessment vs. training needs assessment

Opportunity assessment	Training needs assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cheap</li><li>• Simple</li><li>• Action oriented</li><li>• Identifies immediate demand and funding</li><li>• Practical approach</li><li>• Flexible</li><li>• Short term view</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expensive</li><li>• Comprehensive</li><li>• Often complex</li><li>• Long term view</li><li>• Usually not fully implemented</li><li>• No relation to funding or demand</li><li>• Academic approach</li></ul>

### Capacity building

Capacity building for integrated water resources management is more than just training and education activities. It also comprises setting up the framework in which IWRM can take place, including a proper legal framework and institutional environment (box 1).

Box 1

#### ***What is included in capacity building?***

Networks of capacity building institutions are centres of knowledge and have to develop and impart that knowledge. IWRM and water sector capacity building needs may present themselves in various forms.

Some examples of these capacity building services are:

- Training and education courses;
- Research;
- Information provision through workshops, consultancy, facilitation;
- Institutional strengthening or development;
- Planning.

### Tool description

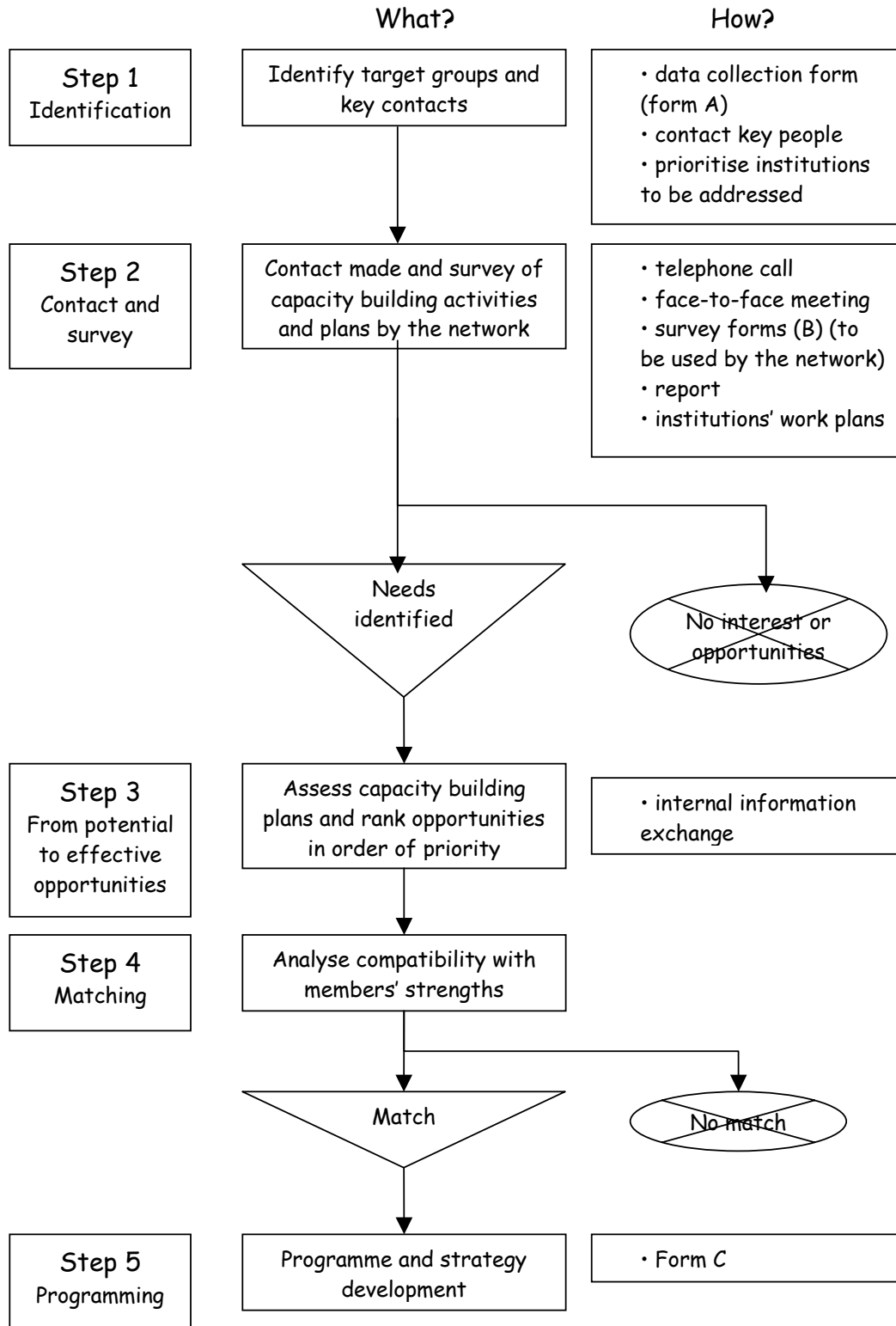
Regular use of the tool will assist in ensuring close contact with the water managers and the relevance of the network programme but attention should constantly be given to quality of work.

The tool consists of five steps:

1. Identification of target groups – institutions, organisations or individuals active in the water sector and likely interested in capacity building;
2. Establish contact and survey activities and needs – the institution's/organization's work plans and capacity building activities will be inventoried;
3. From potential to effective opportunities – opportunities for the network will be analysed and ranked;
4. Matching – the information of step 3 will be analysed on compatibility with programmes and capacities of network members;
5. Programming – a programme and strategy be developed.

The flow chart of the steps is presented in figure 1. This document presents further detailed descriptions of the steps and actions to be taken in each of the steps.

Figure 1: Flow chart



## Step 1: Identifying the target groups

The use of the tool begins with the identification of the different target groups and contact details for each of them.

### Objective of step 1

To identify the different target groups that are potential demanders of capacity building services for water resources management, to describe their profiles, and to determine their degree of “attractiveness”.

### Expected output of step 1

A list of key institutions/organisations and contact people in each of them. An understanding of their profiles and prioritising according to their potential demand for capacity building services that may be delivered by the network (see Form A in annex 1, to be filled by the network).

### How to identify target groups:

Key target groups, institutions, will be found amongst the following stakeholders:

Box 2

#### ***Examples of target groups in the water sector***

##### Government Agencies:

- Water management agencies and water user agencies (at the national, state and local governments' level and in relation with agriculture, environment, health, education, energy, water supply and sanitation, etc).

##### Utilities/ Municipalities

- Water and wastewater management departments.

##### NGOs, International agencies

- Concerned with urban and rural development, water services.

##### Donors

- funding developments in the water sector.

Regional or country capacity building networks should use members and other key people to identify the target institutions and the key contact persons within them.

Once the contact details have been collected, it needs to be analysed to prioritise and programme actual face-to-face meetings. Form A can be used as a basis for this information.

## Step 2: Planning Contact

Step 1 of the tool was to identify the different target groups and collect basic information on where opportunities may be found for capacity building networks. Step two is to establish contact and determine what specific capacity building support is required in the coming period and assess how the network can respond.

If the number of institutions to be contacted becomes numerous, prioritise and select the most prominent ones to start. Later on the list can be updated. The number of institutions to be contacted is directly related to the network secretariat's communication possibilities, skills and capacity to deliver.

### **Objective of step 2**

Make contact with key contact persons within water management agencies to describe the capacity building network its strengths and benefits and to determine their capacity building demand.

### **Expected Output**

A list of capacity building activities planned by the contacted agencies and prioritised for action by the network according to agreed criteria.

### **Preparing for contact**

The person to be contacted may not yet know about the network or may know only a little. Therefore always provide, and leave behind, general information about the network.

The first step in developing an effective persuasive communication is knowing what you want to get across and what you want to get out from the meeting. First you need to be able to communicate what the network is about and at least be prepared with clear information on the following:

- What is the network, its goals, objectives and membership?
- Provide the contact with clear information on the potential of the network and the benefits of the multidisciplinary approach.
- Provide information on the activities and outputs of the network so far.

Don't be afraid to enlist the support of members and influential partners. Build on your strengths as a network. Who else than capacity building networks can offer the multidisciplinary skills for IWRM, with a local knowledge and understanding, in the local language, with the possibility for a continuous development process, offering efficient costs resulting from networking and resource sharing, and in close links with the global community as back-up support?

Given the wide spectrum of IWRM, and the large capacity building needs at institutional, legislation and human resources development in general, focusing on capacity building for IWRM gives networks the opportunity to be able to respond to capacity building needs in specific water sub-sectors such as water supply, groundwater, wastewater etc. Make sure to find out as much as you can about the contact institution before the visit so that you don't waste their time with basic questions.

### **Establishing contact**

When the time comes to choose the means of communication, face-to-face meetings are the best option; a personal telephone call is second best. Impersonal e-mails are not likely to be successful; these mails should then be followed-up with a telephone call.

After giving information about the network and the purpose of the meeting you may then be able to get into details about capacity building activities of the target institution.

### **Useful information**

The issues that are being looked for are:

- Are there any capacity building activities in water planned for the coming period (one year)?
- What is the present state of planning in terms of funding, target group, subject, and time schedule?
- Who is going to do this capacity building and can we be considered, taking into account the added value of the network?

The information is then used for scoring of potential opportunities (see step 3).

### **Step 3: From “potential” to “effective” opportunities**

The identification of the different segments, their degree of “attractiveness” and the information gathered with the communication will ideally bring some concrete opportunities to be undertaken by the network. Now some opportunities will need to be followed-up and most probably time and work will be needed to do so.

#### **Objective of step 3:**

To collect and organise information on identified institutions and organisations, and score them on commitments and issues relevant to the network.

#### **Expected output:**

Opportunities for network participation in capacity building activities are ranked in order of priority (see Form B in annex 2, to be filled by the network).

#### **Ranking Process**

Drafting proposals, setting teams and attending meetings or writing and responding e-mails are all time consuming activities. How to determine which is worthwhile?

Making use of the outputs of previous steps and using a score card, is a desk exercise to be undertaken by the person doing the assessment, generally from within the network secretariat. The rank goes from 1 to 5 for each activity, and the rank value is given according to the following elements of each of the identified activities:

- Aspects relevant to the commitment of the target institution:
  - Are funds already available / allocated? If the money is there then much of the uncertainty is removed.
  - Is the activity already scheduled? If a reasonable level of planning has already taken place or the capacity building is in support of an already ongoing project then there is a good chance that the work will become available.
  
- Aspects relevant to the network:
  - How much effort in preparatory work would need to be done? You don't want to take on too much work if the outcome is not certain.
  - Is the proposed capacity building within the competence of the network? Or can a team be assembled? If you don't have the expertise then best leave it to someone better qualified rather than damage the reputation of the network.
  - Could this lead to a follow up with more work? If so then you may be more prepared to invest time in the starting activity.
  - What is the relevance to the network mission? Added value comes if the activity can also help strengthen the network mission and goals.

At this stage of the opportunity assessment it has been analysed that the contacts between the water management agencies and the network have led to common areas of work where the network members can contribute to developing water management implementation capacities. The ranking of these opportunities is a step towards programming of priority capacity building activities by the network members in consultation with the clients.

Considering the above, the opportunities will be prioritised and those highest on the list will be followed up. Do not discount that lower scoring opportunities may later change to high scoring ones as new developments occur. Keep in touch with the contacts generated.

It is important that the results of the ranking are communicated with the network members and that there is agreement on who will do what and when. If appropriate and an opportunity occurs, this would be the proper time to organise a get-together to discuss

these results in order to get concurrence of the network members before going into actual programming of activities.

#### **Step 4: Matching**

After having collected information on capacity building needs and prioritised opportunities it is appropriate to relate the information to the already identified capacities of the networks members. The question to be answered is whether the network is in a position to meet the demand for capacity building expressed by the organisations or institutions contacted and analysed. Starting point is the strengths and programmes of the network members and their comparative advantage.

##### **Objective of step 4:**

To assess opportunities for the network members on the basis of their capacities to meet identified needs.

##### **Expected output:**

Information base on identified network members in relation to capacity building needs of the institutions and organisations assessed.

##### **Process**

This step in assessing opportunities for the network and its members is highly dependent on communication within the network. The analyst or network manager is to communicate with each on the members individually on the capacity building needs that have been identified and the programmes of the members that could address those needs.

When the assessed needs cannot be addressed by the network members through their expertise and/or programmes it is advisable not to engage in an area where there is no comparative advantage. In other words, if the required capacity building activities for the water management implementers do not match with the capacities of the network members, it is better not to consider them as opportunities for the network. However, when those skills are available outside the membership without bringing risk for the network's reputation, it would be a good idea to bring them in. These institutions or individuals may also be invited to join the network contributing to the openness and inclusiveness of the network.

#### **Step 5: Programming**

When the steps 1 through 4 have been followed consistently, the actual programming of capacity building activities that meet the training needs of water management agencies should be an easy task. In doing so, a clear distinction should be made between immediate, short term network activities and a long term programme development. It is also advised to keep in mind that the process undergone in assessing opportunities does not replace a comprehensive training needs assessment, as has been pointed out in the introductory section.

Programming of demand responsive training is a shared responsibility of the network secretariat, the network members and the water management implementers. The inclusion of implementers in the process will not only ensure that activities undertaken meet their requirements but also that their agendas meet those of the capacity builders.

##### **Objective of step 5:**

To develop a consistent work plan for the networks that involves delivery of capacity building services to water managers in response to their immediate needs.

**Expected output:**

A programme of activities, including modules, timeframes and budgets.

**Process**

The network secretariat drafts a work programme on the basis of the outcomes of the assessment. However, at a very early stage this draft needs to be shared with the network members who will need to provide inputs on their particular programmes and activities.

Possible actions may include:

- Follow-up with members to assess commitments to planned activities
- Contact with the organisation to e.g.:
  - Bid for the task
  - Further clarify the task
  - Get agreement that the network can do the task
  - Prepare the implementation plan
- Planning and preparing for implementation

The programme of capacity building activities needs to contain the following elements:

- descriptions of the trainings and modules and how they would contribute to addressing IWRM capacity building needs;
- a clear timeframe of activities;
- allocation of responsibility to network members;
- budgets for implementing the activities and how costs would be recovered.

<b>Sample content of a work plan</b>
<p>A work plan is a detailed plan setting out how the network is going to carry out the work in order to achieve its goals. They can vary in complexity, but at least it contain all of the following:</p> <p><u>Background</u> Description of the network and past activities and in relation to these activities, where the network is standing at the moment.</p> <p><u>Objectives</u> The objectives of the network should be re-stated and used as the basis for justifying and grouping the work plan activities</p> <p><u>Work planning</u> Using the objective as unit of analysis, state the overall result expected by the end of the period (one year). General description of planned activities and how they link to the expected output.</p> <p>List and describe each activity to make clear what will be done, by who and why. Identify where the resources are expected to come from. This should be repeated for each objective.</p> <p><u>Budget</u> Describe the budget for each activity</p> <p><u>Timetable</u> Show the timeline for the activities</p>

**Annex 1: Identifying target groups – example data collection sheet (Form A)**

-Should not be sent as a questionnaire, but filled in by the network-

1. Institution/ organisation name:

2. Type of organisation:

(e.g. ministry of water resources, water users' association, research institute, water supply company)

3. Main areas of work/activities:

(e.g. water supply and sanitation, water infrastructure, water management, water law, environment, agriculture)

4. Geographical coverage:

(e.g. regional, national, local)

5. Links with other institutions/ organisations/ networks:

(Type of organisation, kind of link and activities within that framework: e.g. National/regional/International, MOU, agreement, contract)

6. Reasons why this organisation is a priority contact:

(e.g. areas of work, position in water management, availability of funds/staff/facilities, personal contacts)

Contact person:

Position:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Address:

**Annex 2: Example – Information to be collected and ranking of opportunities. (Form B)**

-Should not be sent as a questionnaire, but filled in by the network-

1. Institution/ organisation name:
  
2. Capacity building activities planned for the coming year:

	Name of activity and description	Target Group	Opportunity for network involvement	Available budget	Funding source	Rank
1						
2						
3						

Considerations in ranking (see step 3, Ranking process):

- Relevance to network objectives and skills
- Timing and feasibility for network management and members
- Funding availability
- Work required to get the capacity building assignment
- Likelihood of getting the capacity building assignment
- Possible follow-up activities

Rank:

- 1** = high likelihood of implementation and allocation to network, and high relevance to network;
- 2** = high likelihood of implementation and allocation to network;
- 3** = reasonable chance that the activity will take place and the network will be considered;
- 4** = activity uncertain or already to be implemented by others;
- 5** = very low likelihood of network success or relevance to network.

**For network management:**

(This part shall be used to draft the network action plan)

Network members involved in addressing the identified capacity building opportunities, according to their capacity to deliver:

Network member:	Action:	Deadline for action:
1		
2		
3		